

## **Rat Harborage – Prevention & Control Measures**

### **The Norway Rat**



The type of rat found in the Baltimore area is called the Norway rat, also known as the brown rat, house rat, sewer rat, wharf rat and barn rat.

#### **Identification:**

- Body length – 7 to 10 inches
- Tail – 6 to 8 inches
- Weight – 7 to 18 ounces
- Fur – coarse and gray to brown to almost black – lighter fur on belly.

#### **Diseases:**

Typhus, leptospirosis, trichinosis, salmonellosis, and rat bite fever may be transmitted to humans.

#### **Habitat:**

Lives in close association with people. Burrows to make nests under buildings, beneath concrete slabs, along stream banks, around ponds, in garbage dumps and other locations. Seldom travels more than 150 feet.

#### **Damage Prevention and Control Methods:**

- 1) Exclusion: Seal all openings larger than ½ inch, including doors, windows and foundations. Metal collars, shields, hardware cloth and masonry may be used to reduce opening size.
- 2) Poisons: Follow the directions on the manufacturer's label, or call a professional exterminator. Examples of pesticides include: d-Con, Ramik, Furmarin, Contrax-P, Talon, Prolin, Rozol and Ramki.
- 3) Traps: Follow the directions on the manufacturer's label or call a professional exterminator.

**Habitat Modification:** Remove all sources of food, water and shelter. See the checklist below:

- Use metal garbage cans with tight-fitting lids; rats will not gnaw through metal.
- Place all trash in trashcans, so it can be removed.
- Keep tight-fitting lids on trashcans to prevent rats from climbing in to find food.
- Remove leftover dog and/or cat food after each feeding.
- Remove dog or cat manure daily, since this is a food source.
- Keep bird feed off the ground – provide a catch tray, or cease feeding birds until rat infestation is abated.
- Mow down tall weeds and grass.
- Stack lumber or building materials at least 18 inches above the ground. This deprives rats of a place to hide, and you can look for signs of infestation more easily.
- Remove junked cars, abandoned appliances, furniture and other bulky items, as these provide good homes for rats.
- Close holes in windows, doors, etc., with screens (1/4 inch mesh or less) or sheet metal.
- Close openings around pipes by using cement or sheet metal. Rats cannot gnaw through these materials.
- Use only grass, flower cuttings and leaves in compost piles. Leave out food scraps, trash or garbage.
- Vegetable Gardens: Stake or tie up as many plants as possible. Bean, cucumber and tomato plants – when left to grow on the ground provide harborage for rats.
- Pick up fruit or vegetables that have fallen from the plant and dispose of them in trash containers. Garden rows should be kept free of grass and weeds, as these also provide harborage for rats.

**Responsibility for Abatement:**

A rat infestation is a violation of the *Howard County Code, Section 12.110*. Rat infestations must be abated for economic and health reasons. Rats may cause costly damage to property and may transmit diseases to humans. *Section 12.110* states that a rat infestation is considered a nuisance and the responsibility for the abatement belongs to the person(s) who own or rent the property on which the infestation exists.

For further information contact the Bureau of Environmental Health at (410) 313-1773.

Visit [hchealth.org](http://hchealth.org) or call 410.313.6300 for more information.

